

Original *Profile of Hope* Subject Passes—Celebrating the Life of Myra Kanter

By Kathleen Piché, L.C.S.W., Public Affairs Director

As part of the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) fight against stigma and discrimination in persons diagnosed with mental illness, the Public Information Office (PIO) created a video project in 2010 entitled *Profiles of Hope*, a thirty-minute presentation for cable television consisting of three persons in recovery. The original *Profiles* series featured Myra Kanter, R.N., Peer and Patients' Rights Advocate, interviewed in November, 2009. Myra and husband Joel reviewed their experience with Myra's physical disabilities as well as her recovery from diagnoses of Bipolar disorder, Bulimia and Attention Deficit Disorder.

It is with great sadness to note Myra's passing on May 24, 2013. Myra was a staunch advocate for the Patients' Rights Office in Orange County since 1995. In 2006, she won the California Association of Patients' Rights Advocates award for Advocate of the Year. Myra was passionate about fighting the stigma associated with having a mental health diagnosis and expressed her feelings in prose and poetry (see below).

Myra's involvement in the *Profiles of Hope* video project demonstrates the need for hope in recovery and highlights the importance of community support and relationships that promote wellness, including the role of significant others. We will miss Myra, but her advocacy and words live on for all that knew her.



Myra and Joel Kanter, guests on the *Free Your Mind Projects* radio show, 11/28/10

To view Myra's Profile of Hope:

http://dmh.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dmh/press_center/press_detail/?current=true&urile=wcm:path:/dmh+content/dmh+site/home/press+center/press+center+detail/stories+of+impact+archive

I Humbly Beckon The Soul of Stigma

By Myra Kanter, R.N.

5/16/2010

In the clear, dark, twinkling sky of innumerable—seemingly, timeless stars. I devote my small, flickering LIGHT to the transformation of the vile mind-sets, attitudes, beliefs, and thought-forms of STIGMA toward people with a Mentally Illness &/or Addiction, on the “Big Blue Marble” / “Mother Earth”.

I have observed 2-forms of STIGMA toward persons with a Mental Illness &/or Addiction on Earth:

- 1) SOCIAL STIGMA = generalized, destructive negativity toward persons with a Mental Illness &/or Addiction by society. (Most often, in the absence of any scientific data, reflecting what they are saying is true.)
- 2) SELF-STIGMA = when a person with a Mental Illness &/or Addiction accepts / personalizes society's generalized, destructive negativity toward them as true, markedly lowering their: sense of self-worth, self-esteem, & self-regard; and diminishing their ability to: recover, achieve life-goals, earn accomplishments, contribute to society, be independent, be proud, be who they really are, and much, much more...

We have studied; researched; analyzed; formed Committees; hired Experts; used Technology; employed the highest Degreed; & used much Manpower, to eliminate Stigma—with minimal impact.

Our Communities & families continue to suffer—because individuals fear getting treatment for Mental Illness &/or Addiction due to Stigma, so the symptoms persist & go untreated—needless: Suicides, Despair, Anger, Depression, Tears, Suffering, Emotional Pain, Broken Relationships, Rage, Fear, Yelling, Shame, Isolation, Unemployment, Blame, Grief, Arguing, & Guilt...

Nothing holy, nothing honorable, noble, worthwhile, or inspirational ever resulted from Stigma. Humanity is desperate, sick, & tired of treading its redundant, ruinous-cycle. Thus, I meekly & graciously beckon the attention of the Soul of Stigma. & invite it to transform to a higher form of light—to continue serving Humanity; but, through COMPASSION—versus Contempt.

I have observed the Heavy, Low-Frequency, Dark, Negative-Energies of Stigma, Transform into Light, High-Frequency, Radiant, Positive-Energies of Health & Healing, by activating the potent, sometimes dormant, often unacknowledged, Mystical-Energies of Spirit & Soul.

Upon animation, these Rejuvenating energies summon the Holy Grails of: “Dignity” & “Respect”. They transform Stigma from an Unhealthy / Diseased state, to one of Health & Healing. This occurs every time “Dignity” & “Respect” are present, while interacting with a person, with a Mentally Illness &/or Addiction.

We can transform Stigma into Compassion, Health & Healing by articulating / acting-out “Dignity” & “Respect” toward people with a Mental Illness &/or Addiction. We also need to teach our Youngsters, Youth, Teenagers, Adults, & Elders, to treat persons with a Mental Illness &/or Addiction with “Dignity” & “Respect”.

May Earth know Peace. In the very least, silently cradled in the hearts of a precious few. At the most, in the faces & hands of people—as their hearts convey “Dignity” & “Respect” to one another—in sincere efforts to get along!

From up here, one never forgets that the Universe is INFINITE!
There is plenty of everything, imaginable, for each & every one of you!
Don't ever—EVER—let anyone tell you otherwise!

Myra Jane Kanter, born 6/14/59, died 5/24/13 May she rest in peace.